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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

Diets to Fit the Family Income



A radio talk by Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, broadcast Thursday, September 3, 1936, in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour.

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MR. SALISBURY: Being Thursday, as usual we have on the schedule Ruth Van Deman's report from the Bureau of Home Economics, of particular interest to women, Miss Van Deman.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Thank you, Morse. I don't mean to take issue with you but I believe my subject today is of as much interest to men as it is to women. Don't you think "Diet to Fit the Family Income" is something that comes pretty close to the man of the house?

MR. SALISBURY: Mighty close. Hits him square in the solar plexus, I'd say, in two of the most vital spots - the stomach and the pocketbook. Well, what's the story on diet?

MISS VAN DEMAN: First of all, the announcement of a new bulletin just off the press. It's called "Diets to Fit the Family Income". Mrs. Rowena Carpenter and Doctor Hazel Stiebeling wrote it as a help to town and city families who have to buy practically all their food and want to get the best possible return for their money.

MR. SALISBURY: You mean it's going to help them to find bargains?

MISS VAN DEMAN: No, I mean something that goes much deeper than bargains in the grocery store. I mean the best returns in nutritive value for whatever amount of money they can afford to spend on food. I mean a diet plan aimed at the health of the family - a selection of foods week in and week out that will give children the substances their bodies need to grow and develop right, and also will supply the grown-ups with the right things in the right proportions to help them keep well and vigorous.

The other day when I was reading a manuscript of Doctor Stiebeling's I came across such a clear statement of her philosophy about the food question that I copied it down to read to you.

"Diets that are good enough to keep families in average health may not be good enough to promote the best health, or to enable individuals to attain the highest of which they are capable. The conquest of such scourges as scurvy, rickets, and beri-beri, while dramatic, probably has less significance for the human race as a whole than the acquisition and application of the knowledge that will improve the general health and well-being of every man, woman, and child through better use of food."

(over)

Now, with a broad idea like that as a background, this new bulletin gives four general diet plans to suit families with different amounts of money. At the top is the liberal diet. Then the moderate-cost, next the minimum cost, and at the bottom the restricted, for times of calamity when people are hard put to it to know how to stretch their food money so as to make it cover the bare necessities.

Each of these plans is worked out in terms of so many quarts of milk, so many dozen eggs, so many pounds of meat, flour, sugar, fat, fruits, vegetables, and so on, per week for families of different size and make-up. Then there's a brief description of the part each group of food plays toward making a well-balanced diet. And finally, to show how the plans work out in meals, there is a set of menus for a week at each level.

MR. SALISBURY: A very comprehensive, practical treatment of the subject, it sounds like.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, it is. A practical interpretation of what the nutritionists know about food values coupled with what the food economists know about prices, supplies in the market, and what Americans are in the habit of eating. There's plenty of room for choice under each of these diets as outlined. Probably no two families will ever interpret any one of them exactly alike, and it isn't meant that they should. The Department of Agriculture pioneered in research on food values and diet nearly 50 years ago, not with a view to reforming people's eating or dictating what they should eat. But with a view to giving them scientific facts to help them make their own choices. This new Farmers' Bulletin, No. 1757 is the up-to-date version of that policy.

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